

Newsletter

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Front exterior of the first authentic Kyoto *machiya* to be built in 90 years.



Foundation and frame of the second Kyoto *machiya*.

Further to the June newsletter story about **the first authentic *machiya* to be built in Kyoto in 90 years**, JapanCraft21 partner Gion Naito is adding the final finishing touches to the structure and the new owners (a young family of four) will take up residence in August. Built according to traditional methods using joinery and mud walls (but no nails) and featuring a garden space, modernized layout, and improved earthquake, typhoon and fire resistance, the home's enhanced energy efficiency – including double-glazed windows - enables it to remain cool in summer and warm in winter.

The *machiya* is the culmination of a successful six-year initiative in which Tomohiro Naito worked with the City of Kyoto government to review and overhaul planning laws, allowing future *machiya* to be constructed far more quickly. A **second project** is now underway with the foundation laid and the all-joinery frame already up (see photo, left) after only a couple of months.

July was month three of our one-year intensive wood-joinery training course for working carpenters at our free-of-charge *juku* (school).

JapanCraft21 now offer an **open house program for the construction industry** to observe these carpenters' weekend *juku* sessions (see June 2025 newsletter). The aim is to raise awareness of the *juku* and so attract more participants to the program.



Young working carpenters learning wood-joinery techniques at JapanCraft21's *juku*.



JapanCraft21 recently launched an exciting new initiative, **Friends of JapanCraft21**, under which a select group of leaders will act as JapanCraft21's global ambassadors, charged with telling the JapanCraft21 story worldwide to potential supporters. The Friends includes a diverse array of eminent figures from Tokyo and abroad, including people with experience in luxury marketing, nonprofit leadership, strategic consulting, academia, construction and bespoke clothing, as well as the grand master of an esoteric martial arts school dating back to the 1500s. The group is led by Mark Davidson – a university professor who was previously the US Embassy Tokyo's Cultural Attache and an international business executive- and his spouse Kuniko, a graphic designer and writer who formerly worked at the Smithsonian Institution.



Steve Beimel speaking at the Japanese craftsmanship symposium at the French Pavilion at the 2025 Osaka Expo.

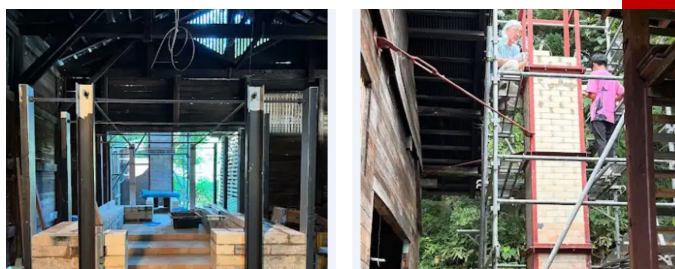
JapanCraft21 founder Steve Beimel appeared as a panellist at a **symposium on Japanese craftsmanship held at the French pavilion at the 2025 Osaka World Expo**, where he discussed Japanese crafts and opportunities for business partnerships.

The symposium, held in the pavilion's VIP room, was attended by around 80 guests, including many craft-related people as well as media representatives.

Well-known Japanese product designer and *Long Life Design* radio show moderator/facilitator Kenmei Nagaoka has been working with Steve on a new radio series, “**Beimel’s Vision**”, that will be broadcast from August 17, 2025. The series, which aims to remind Japanese people of the “crafts they’ve forgotten”, will be broadcast five times this year as a regular feature on *Long Life Design*.

When all the wood-burning tunnel kilns collapsed in the town of Suzu in last year’s Noto earthquake, **JapanCraft21 launched a project – including \$30,000 in funding - to construct a communal kiln** for young local potters, training them in kiln building and kiln firing of the 1000-year-old *suzuyaki* ceramic process.

Earthquake-collapsed kiln in Suzu.



Current kiln building in progress.

The first round of applicants to the **5th JapanCraft21 Japan Traditional Craft Revitalization Contest** has been evaluated and narrowed down to 10 semi-finalists. A second round involving a more detailed evaluation of shortlisted applicants will be followed by final judging by a professional team and interviews in late autumn, with the winner of the Ronnie Prize and the names of those to be added to JapanCraft21’s Craft Leaders Program to be announced in December 2025. The awards ceremony is scheduled for February 19, 2026, in Roppongi, Tokyo.

The guest speaker at this year’s **Spring Cafe Online Meeting with Craft Leaders** was Miyoko Demay, former CEO of Tiffany Japan, Nintendo board member, Representative of Japan on the World Monuments Fund Board and general advisor for luxury brands, who gave a stimulating and encouraging 45-minute talk, followed by Q&A with Craft Leaders.

Kuradashi Radio, which focuses on people involved in the crafts world, will feature a recently conducted interview with Steve Beimel in three of its upcoming episodes.

Link to podcast (in Japanese): <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1cWZaID4sQSeF8oQMoknY7>



Tokonoma of the Beimel residence.

The July edition of **Japanese fashion magazine Fujin Gaho** carried **a full-page interview with Steve Beimel**. The article was accompanied by a photo (see left) showing a hand-dyed roll of kimono silk hung like a scroll in the tokonoma alcove of Steve’s living room. In the interview, Steve discusses his work through JapanCraft21 to revitalize endangered crafts and support artisans, ensuring that centuries-old skills are not lost to time. He also highlights JapanCraft21’s various activities in pursuit of this mission, including conducting annual national contests to spotlight talented craftspeople, fostering collaboration, and building networks of supporters dedicated to preserving Japan’s unique craft heritage.

It’s been a busy month at JapanCraft21 but there’s even more happening behind the scenes that most don’t hear about – planning, preparing, planting seeds and much more.
We appreciate our members’ ongoing support as we progress our various initiatives.